

A LECTURE
ON
QUACK MEDICINES,

DELIVERED
TO THE WAKEFIELD MECHANICS' INSTITUTION,
FEBRUARY 20th, 1843.

BY
T. G. WRIGHT, M. D.

London:
R. GROOMBRIDGE, PATERNOSTER ROW;
SIMPKIN MARSHALL, AND CO., STATIONERS' COURT:
LEEDS: BAINES & NEWSOME;
WAKEFIELD: HURST, STANFIELD & PALMER, ILLINGWORTH & HICKS.
AND ALL BOOKSELLERS.
MDCCCXLIII.

HEPWORTH AND MICKLETHWAITE, PRINTERS, WAKEFIELD.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In compliance with a kindly expressed wish of several of his auditors, accompanied by the suggestion, that a more extensive promulgation of the opinions and arguments, contained in the following lecture, may do good, the AUTHOR commits it to the press: with some diffidence and hesitation, however, as, being written for oral delivery, without any view to further publication, its didactic style may not be found so well adapted for perusal in a printed form. He has thought it best, notwithstanding, to give it nearly verbatim, as it was listened to, by his partial and approving friends.

South Parade, Wakefield,

March 6th, 1843.

L E C T U R E .

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN,

IN selecting a subject for my address to you this evening, according to the request of the Committee, I have been guided solely by a consideration of the nature and objects of our excellent Institution, and by a wish to benefit that large and estimable class, who form the majority of its members ; for whose especial advantage the Mechanics' Institute was established ; and to whose spirited support it, in a great measure, owes its present flourishing condition. The object of these weekly lectures ought undoubtedly to be, to make knowledge as attractive as possible ; to impart information in an interesting form ; and also to assist the Members to think correctly upon subjects of general usefulness. — It is with this latter purpose, namely, to enable them to think correctly upon a subject highly important to personal health and comfort, and yet on which a vast amount of ignorance and prejudice generally prevails, that I have been induced to offer the theme to your notice, which stands attached to my name for this evening :—the same motive which prompted me on

a former occasion, to illustrate to you the origin and formation of our Language,* leads me now to a very different and much less attractive, but not less useful topic, that of *Quack Medicines*.

In venturing upon it I felt some hesitation lest the title might alarm the fairer portion of my audience, as so much that is foul and disgusting connected with it daily obtrudes itself upon the public eye; it may therefore be well, on the very threshold of my lecture, to allay any such fears if they exist, by an assurance, that notwithstanding some difficulty in adapting the discussion to a mixed assemblage, no remarks will be here expressed, but such as may be listened to and reflected upon by *all*.

QUACKERY is a subject far too wide in its ramifications, and too firmly rooted, for any one to attempt to expose its folly and absurdity, in the limits of one short lecture. Like the Monster-Hydra of classic fable, were we to succeed in destroying one head, at least two would spring up in its place, and the task would prove a labour truly Herculean. There is a love of the Marvellous, an instinctive propensity to credulity, an aptness for deception and imposture, in our national character, which renders England, more than any other country, the chosen land of Quackery; and which is too deeply implanted in its mental soil to be easily eradicated. It is more or less widely spread through our national customs and habitudes, mingles not only with all the chances and changes of life in relation to health and disease, but meddles with every profession and every occupation; intrudes its specious presence often into the highest, and into the holiest places, as well as into the most vicious and

* A Lecture *On the Origin and formation of the English Language*, read February 28, 1842.

worthless paths of existence: is sometimes to be found even in the senate and in legislative assemblies, no less than in the harangue of the demagogue, or its more legitimate arena, on the stage of the charlatan, and in the garb of the fortune-teller; and with so plausible and insinuating an address that the wisest and the best of men may sometimes be deceived by its influence.

It is only one Section of this extensive theme that I propose this evening to discuss, viz: those remedies generally known by the conventional designation which I have adopted as my text — *Quack Medicines*. The term is usually understood to mean, Medicaments which are put forth by their projectors as infallible nostrums for certain complaints, the composition of which is held secret, and which are sold under the protection (or infliction, I know not which to call it) of a stamped envelope. It also, however, includes remedies the composition of which is avowed, but which are urged upon the credulity of the public as sovereign cures for any one, or for every disease.

I shall not invite you to the useless task of tracing the HISTORY of these reputed medicines. It would lead us into the mystic regions of Demonology and Necromancy, of Alchemy and Astrology and Witchcraft, regions fertile enough in anecdote and absurdity, and in lessons of fraud and imposture, but foreign to my immediate purpose. A very few words on this head may suffice.

In the earliest ages of which history treats, the art of medicine was exceedingly rude, and the sick, prompted by pain, ignorance, and superstition, had recourse to any remedies which the more wise or more crafty of their neighbours could suggest. Invalids were brought into the market-places, in order that any one who had been afflicted with a

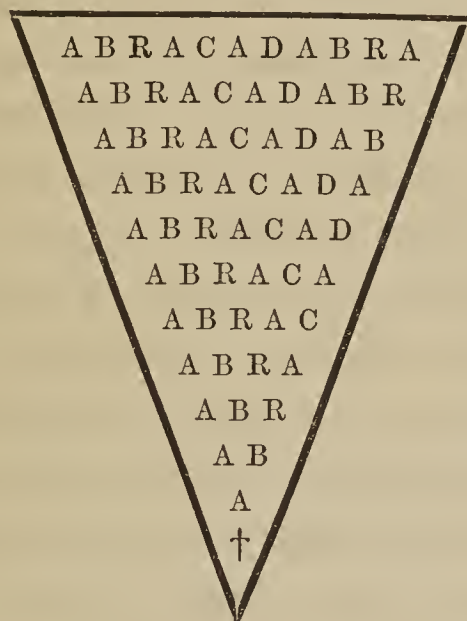
like disease, might bestow advice on the sufferer. Besides simple mendicaments, charms and incantations were resorted to, and, in the cases of more illustrious patients, the oracles of the Gods were consulted for relief. In those days, it is easy to conceive that the trade of the quack-medicine-vendor would be a thriving one, for credulity would be freely open to his artifice, without having other or better resource: — civilization may blush to think, how thriving a trade it is *still!*

Several of the Fathers of Medical Science were indeed little better than charlatans, and were compelled to resort to charms and magic, for want of better modes of treatment, till observation and the study of anatomy, taught them to investigate more correctly the functions of the human frame and its changes under disease. For instance, I once met with an old writer* who gravely recommends as a remedy in Scrofula, the heart of a green lizard, enclosed in a silver case, and worn round the neck of the patient! a charm quite as effectual, I dare say, as the Royal Touch, which was the universally accredited remedy in later times, when King CHARLES THE SECOND is said to have placed his hand on 92000 persons in 22 years; and when not only wise and skilful physicians and surgeons were induced to accord with and recommend the treatment, but our CHURCH had an established form of service for the purpose.† Serenus Samonicus, another old writer, mentions for the cure of the *Hemitritea*, a species of Fever, the

* “*Contra omnes strumas et feminis et maribus utilissimum est, si cor lacertæ viridis lupino argenteo clausum, in collo suspensum semper habeant.*” MARCELLUS DE MEDICAMENTIS.

† The custom was discontinued by KING GEORGE THE FIRST: but the service remained a part of the Liturgy for some time after his reign, as the “*Forma Strumosos Attrectandi*” is contained in a Latin copy of the Book of Common Prayer, printed in 1733, which is now in my possession.

charm, also to be worn round the neck, which I here exhibit — the ABRACADABRA, and which I shall be happy to present to any one suffering from that disease, as a much more agreeable mode of cure than taking physic.*



PARACELSUS, of whom some of you may have heard as a celebrated physician of the 16th century, was as arrant a charlatan as any of the St. John Longs or Morisons of our own days. He was a Swiss by birth, and travelled over France, Italy and Germany, glorying in the lofty title of *Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Paracelsus Bombastus de Hohenheim*; practised all manner of absurdities along with a daring and reckless treatment of disease; effected some remarkable cures, which were blazoned forth with a halo of falsehood and exaggeration, well imitated in many of our modern advertisements; and thus gained for himself a vast repute for skill and wisdom. He pretended to have discovered the *Elixir Vitæ*, a universal medicine for the preservation of health, the perpetuation of youth and the indefinite prolongation of life, which, along with

* This very amulet, and several others of like import, were employed, we are told, by the despairing victims of the Great Plague in London in 1664-6.

the Philosopher's Stone, was an object of the enthusiastic and fanatical labours of the Alchemists. The Elixir of Paracelsus, however, did not preserve its discoverer from the effects of his own intemperate habits: He died of a fever in 1541. Though multitudes of victims must have been immolated by the practice of this arch-quack, yet his career was not without its value, in illustrating the use and abuse of several powerful medicines in which he recklessly dealt. His life may serve as an ensample of crowds of others during succeeding centuries, in the same path of notoriety, though with less enduring fame.

It was customary with the nostrum-mongers of the last age to frequent fairs, and both to exhibit in the metropolis and travel round the provincial towns with a stage and an attendant clown, whose business it was, both literally and figuratively, to blow the trumpet of his master's fame, and tell of his marvellous and mighty cures to the assembled wondering crowd: and very probably some among my audience may remember the quack-doctor and his zany in the market-place of Wakefield. One of the last who thus figured in London, had his stage in Covent Garden, *Dr. Bossy*, of whom some amusing anecdotes are related in a popular work called *Physic and Physicians*.* In our day the Quack plies his trade in comparative seclusion, but his zany, in the shape of a hail-storm of bills, enormous placards, and long advertisements, is ten-fold more efficient than the clown and trumpet: and now instead of one stage and pill-vendor for a whole district, his dupes have become "plenty as blackberries," and every town and almost every village, sends forth its Bossys and Wards, its Morisons and its Worsdells.

* See "*Physic and Physicians*." Vol. I, page 318.

BEFORE proceeding to comment on particular classes of Quack Medicines, it will assist us, to glance at some generally received opinions, or rather popular errors, on which their acceptance and preference with multitudes are founded. A few of the more obvious of these we will now therefore briefly review, in the order in which they naturally suggest themselves.

FIRST: It is believed that bodily illness assumes a certain and stated variety of forms or diseases; and that there are a certain number of remedies "*good for*" these particular and definite diseases: and

SECONDLY, another popular error, resulting from the last, is, that the art of prescribing medicine consists in selecting such herbs or medicaments as are "*good for*" the specific disease, which it is the physician's province to discover: and that the difference in skill between medical practitioners lies, in their having a better or a worse selection of medicines "*good for*" particular diseases, and knowing, by their own experience or that of others, more or less skilfully how to apply them.

This doctrine, from which the natural inference is, that experience is everything in the treatment of disease, and science nothing, is one of which traces and modifications may be met with in almost every non-professional grade of society: and it is by no means confined to the present age. It is precisely the doctrine of the *Empirics*, a sect of Medical Philosophers who flourished about 200 years before the Christian era; and it necessarily led, and would still lead, to such gross quackery in practice, that the name, originally one of learned distinction, has become proverbially synonymous with the terms Quack and Charlatan, in which sense alone it is now understood.

It is the doctrine, too, on which was founded that singular combination of Pharmacy and Astrology, that was much in fashion a century ago, and known as *Herbalism*: and I only need exhibit to you this ponderous volume Culpepper's Herbal* (it was presented to me by a friend as a curious volume to adorn my library, and is one of many similar treatises) to shew how much importance was then attached to this pretended art—Astrological Herbalism, and what a copious collection of remedies were included in its lists. The days of Sibly and Culpepper are now passed away; yet a few scattered votaries of “occult” mysticism are still occasionally to be met with.

But this doctrine gives a very erroneous impression of the present state of Medical Science, and of the relation between Disease and the treatment of the Physician.

The HUMAN CONSTITUTION is a profoundly intricate combination of energies, and mechanical and chemical actions; a labyrinth of nerves, and bones, and muscles, and blood vessels; organs of secretion, and nutrition, and sensation; all performing with minute regularity their appointed offices of life and health: and yet, with all this wonderful and complex organism, similar in structure and plan in each individual, there is still a diversity of constitution in each, as distinct, at least, as that of external features and manners; so that it is impossible that the same disorder of the same functions, or parts of the frame, can present the same aspect in each several patient. In truth it does not:—disease in any one organ of the body, is so varied by the

*“CULPEPPER'S English Physician and Complete Herbal, to which are now first added upwards of one hundred additional Herbs, with a display of their medicinal and occult properties: beautified and enriched with engravings of upwards of four hundred and fifty different plants, and a set of anatomical figures. By E. SIBLY, M. D. 2 Vols. in one. 4to. London. In the year of Masonry 5798.”

constitution in which it occurs, by its cause or causes, by all the variations of surrounding circumstances, that no nomenclature, or list of names of diseases, can contain more than a mere sketch of the forms of diseased action or groups of symptoms, which are daily coming under the notice of the prescriber. There are many disorders the characters of which are generally distinctly marked— as for instance the eruptive fevers, (small-pox, measles, scarlatina, &c.) and inflammations of particular organs, and these are most apt to lead to empirical practice ; but they are always so varied by complication and circumstances, as to require for the same disease, very varied, and sometimes very opposite, modes of treatment. How then, can any one set of medicines be “*good for*” all cases of any one disease ?

Often, indeed, the physician, although he may perfectly understand and skilfully appreciate the train of symptoms which constitute the malady, is perplexed to give a name to the disease ; and feels a name to be a trammel on his practice.

Neither does the name of the disease lead to a knowledge of what is good for that complaint ; nor is it always the symptom which is most prominent or most distressing that indicates the path to relief. The duty of the observer is, with scientific skill to connect all the chain of symptoms together, and by duly weighing in his mind and reflecting upon them, to comprehend, if possible, the precise state and connections of the malady, and thus (without reference to its name) to apply his remedies by direct, and often indirect, means, toward restoring the disordered functions to a state of health : — and though I am far from undervaluing the advantage which long experience confers on the scientific observer, that medical practitioner will be found to be most generally successful in

his treatment of disease, whose knowledge and talent and practised observation, enable him most duly to appreciate and classify the symptoms presented to his notice, most clearly to comprehend the bearing and connection of each, and thus to vary and adapt his mode of practice most exactly, to the particular necessities of the individual case, for which he is called upon to prescribe.

Need I further contrast this system with the empirical doctrine of the charlatan? It must be sufficiently convincing to all, on which side common sense and safety lie.

THIRD: It is a commonly received notion that disease is a something superadded to health, — a peccant humour in the blood, — an evil spirit, as it were, in the system, which must be dislodged by medicine; and that certain medicines are the antidotes for removing these morbid humours from the frame.

This is in some degree the doctrine of the *Humorists*, once a large school of medical philosophers; and too much of the ancient dogma still clings about the treatment of disease. Generally speaking the doctrine is erroneous: but even if it were true, the varieties of these subtle poisons in the bones, and the blood, and in the varied organs of the body, are so infinite, and exhibit such extreme diversity of effect, that the antidotes ought to be at least equally varied, and it would be no less futile to expect to cure all, or any part of them, by one unfailing specific. Disease, however, is not an entity: it is nothing superadded to, but in reality a vitiation of, the powers of life; a morbid derangement of some parts of the intricate mechanism, or the complex chemical changes, going on in the great laboratory of the human body. In this view, it is still more

absurd to suppose, that any one remedy or set of remedies, could rectify each and all the grades and shades of mechanical or chemical derangement, which come under the general term — *disease*.

Another (a FOURTH) common notion is, that diseases often come by themselves, and that certain individuals are peculiarly subject to certain complaints, which grow of their own accord, and without it being possible to prevent them.

This is to a certain extent true; but much less so than people generally imagine. Logically speaking, indeed, no effect (and diseases are all effects) can exist without a cause: and the exciting cause of disease, is very seldom inherent in the constitution. There may be, and commonly is, a greater disposition toward some forms of disease than others, in every constitution; and in some, the disposition to particular diseases is very strong, and requires but slight cause to excite it: yet that cause must not be overlooked. Again, in many diseases the cause or causes are so obscure, as to elude observation; but still, we cannot doubt that some cause must have existed. In the great majority of patients, however, the cause of disease is evident and indisputable, to a discerning inquirer; and when we hear of bilious-complaints, or stomach-complaints, or head-aches, being natural to a person's constitution, we may generally find, that the constitution is much less in fault than its owner; and that instead of nature being to blame, it is most frequently the unconscious or perverse mismanagement of himself, which is the cause of the patient's complaint. How preposterous, then, it is to imagine, that any permanent benefit can be obtained from a set of remedies, in which the *causes* of disease are never taken into account!

A FIFTH popular error consists in attaching undue importance to certain *symptoms* of disease: in regarding as a disease in itself, some one among many characteristics of a malady; and that one, perhaps, a symptom that is common to many and very different forms of disease. Take for example a *Head-ach*: — if we ask the empiric, he will tell us of many remedies which are *good for* the head-ach; but if we ask the scientific practitioner, *he* will tell us, that head-ach may depend upon several states of disorder, each requiring a different course of treatment for relief. Can we venture to apply the same remedy to a case in which head-ach depends upon fullness of the vessels of the brain, threatening apoplexy, and to another in which head-ach arises from exhaustion? A glass of wine, or a nutritious dinner, will perhaps at once relieve the latter; while the former demands prompt blood-letting and general depletion, or the patient's life may probably be lost. A head-ach may be produced by excitement, by bilious disorder, by rheumatism, by fever, by particular odours or impressions on the nervous system; — in short, by many different causes, and be connected with many different maladies: how then can we expect to cure it by one remedy in all cases? how *dare* we venture to delay or tamper with a symptom, which may lead to the most serious results?

A *Cough*, in like manner, is a symptom which is often the subject of empirical practice; but every one knows that there are many disorders, in which a cough is a teasing part of the complaint, from the loud and often distressing, but comparatively harmless, cough of common catarrh, to the slight tickling cough of incipient fatal consumption, and the harrassing cough of dangerous disease of the liver: there are stomach coughs, and nervous coughs, and hys-

teric coughs, and bilious coughs, and a numerous family group of similar import, each varying in its connections and character, and each requiring a different mode of treatment.

The same may be said of the large class of Fevers, and Febrile complaints ; of Rheumatism in all its varied forms ; of Difficulty of breathing ; and of many other symptoms of disease. In all these the cause of the disorder, the peculiar state of diseased action, and the circumstances peculiar to the individual case, are to be studied, in order to arrive at relief. How, therefore, is it possible for one medicine to be *good for a fever*, or for a *cough*, or for a *head-ach*, and so forth ?

A SIXTH frequent error is the idea that Quack Medicines contain certain drugs or chemical substances, which have been discovered by the lucky vendor to be more than usually *good for* any particular ailment, or for all ailments in general.

This notion is equally fallacious with the preceding ones. The substances which enter into the composition of most of the quack medicines that are worth enquiring into, are known to chemists, and in many cases the exact proportions are well ascertained ; and I may safely assert, that they *all* consist of materials such as are employed by medical men in daily practice. Most of the nostrums which are advertised for particular ailments, are derived from the successful prescription of a physician or surgeon in some individual case, and the quack ignorantly proclaims it as a universal specific. Both have the same *Materia-Medica* to deal with ; but the one, without discrimination, pertinaciously adheres to the same prescription in all cases ; while the other, the true disciple of medicine, after considering

well all the bearings of the case before him, selects from among medicines of well-known and acknowledged power, and which are in the hands equally of all practitioners, such as he knows, from his own experience or from the experience of others, will produce certain effects, calculated to relieve the disorder he has to treat : and if he fail, it is not because his remedies are not *good for* that particular complaint ; but either, because he has not chosen such as were best adapted for the purpose he wished, or because disease prevents their usual operation, or because the effect they produce is not sufficient to remove the extent of diseased action which exists : — and if such well-directed and intelligible purpose fail, how are the blind efforts of quackery likely to succeed ?

All these arguments may seem unanswerable : — and yet, were I now to pause for a reply, I could fancy myself assailed by a general swarm of narrative cases, in which many, perhaps, of my present hearers, and crowds of their friends and acquaintances, had been cured of such and such complaints, by such and such quack medicines. True it is, that many such reputed cures are within the cognizance of almost every one : and this leads me to another popular error inseparably connected with our subject.

This, the SEVENTH error, consists in *believing* all the wonderful cures that are told, to delude the credulous, or persuade the ignorant, in these matters.

As to the reported cases blazoned forth in newspaper advertisements, a large proportion of them are evidently fabrications, and the signatures entirely fictitious : a most unwarrantable use is often made, of names standing high in the medical profession, which it would be an insult

to consider genuine : and of the cases in which particular references and addresses are given, with a semblance of candour and truth, most, if not actually false, contain gross exaggerations and mis-statements. “The late Lord Gardestone” says the Writer of a Work already referred to, “himself a valetudinarian, took the pains to enquire for those persons who had actually attested marvellous cures, and he found, that more than two-thirds of the number, *DIED very shortly after they had been cured !*” *

With regard to the accounts of astonishing cures effected by quack medicines, current among one’s own neighbours and acquaintances, I have found a few simple questions to demolish a large proportion of them. Had the patient ever the disease, or form of disease, which is represented to have been cured ? Has it not been some comparatively trivial ailment, which, by simple means, or by a lucky *accidental* use of appropriate remedies, they have been relieved from ?

Still, when all these cases of deceit, and fraud, and imposture, and misapprehension, and exaggeration, which constitute nine-tenths or ninety-nine-hundredths of the reputed cures, have been put aside, there yet remain some instances, in which positive relief has been undoubtedly obtained ; and, to shew in what manner Quack Medicines do occasionally afford benefit, and at what amount of risk that has been gained, is my purpose in the next division of my lecture ; in which I shall take a cursory review of some of those most in favor with the public, and endeavour to assist you to estimate their true value.

* See “Physic and Physicians.” Vol. I, page 308.

PART II.

It would be an almost endless task, were I to attempt a commentary on each of the Quack Medicines which are, or have been, even in the present age, advertised to public notice. A bare enumeration of the names and titles, and pretended virtues of each, would fill a volume.* It is enough for my purpose, and will include quite as much knowledge on the subject, as I possess, or wish to obtain, for me to divide Quack Medicines generally, into four classes or divisions, and to offer you a few practical reflections upon each.

I.

In the FIRST CLASS we may place those remedies, of which, though the composition is kept as secret, as the all-searching analysis of the chemist will permit, the effects are undoubted and well-known, and which are now used, rather as articles of *Materia-Medica*, than as specifics for

* The list of one Establishment alone, that of Messrs. HANNAY AND DIETRICHSEN, which includes, I imagine, most of the Quack Medicines publicly advertised, contains more than 1200 names. *Twelve hundred* cures for all diseases; — besides all the specifics of local fame, with which every town and hamlet, and blacksmith's shop, and old woman's herbal, and young lady's cookery-book, abound! The wonder is not so much that diseases are not cured, for that must be an easy task among so many infallible remedies, but that there are any distempers left among mortals, to require doctors at all!

any particular complaint. I allude chiefly, to the *Lancaster Black Drop*, and to *James' Powder*, both of which are frequently employed by physicians.

The *Lancaster Black Drop* was introduced at a time, when it was a great improvement on the only similar preparation then in use (common Laudanum); and it was promulgated, I believe, by the inventor, simply as an anodyne of more agreeable efficacy than Laudanum, without its being puffed as a specific for any particular disease. Modern chemistry, however, has not only rent the veil from its composition, but has supplied many preparations from Opium, of at least equal value, and the doses of which can be apportioned, with greater precision and certainty.

James' Powder is perhaps the most valuable, — I was about to say the only valuable, remedy, in the list of patent medicines; and almost the only one, which has hitherto perplexed the analysis of the chemist. The substances combined in it are evident (Antimony and Lime); but the precise mode of their admixture and combination, has not been clearly ascertained. Some physicians think it unequalled, in its peculiar mode of action; while others are of opinion, that a very similar preparation of Antimony ordered in the Pharmacopœia, is fully as efficacious. It was originally, and is still, advertised as a general remedy in Fever, Rheumatism, &c.; but, whatever its good properties medicinally, one thing is certain, — that it is not a *specific* for any of these complaints. Used judiciously along with other remedies, as it is prescribed by medical men, it is beneficial, in assisting to relieve certain stages of many febrile complaints; and it is often combined, to aid the effect of certain medicines, in other diseases: but alone, it would have no better chance, than any other pretended cure-all.

Yet the very circumstance of these preparations being used by medical practitioners, appears to brand them with disgrace, in the eyes of the wonder-loving public. They are henceforth discarded by the charlatan: and perhaps, the two already named, though the most useful, when judiciously employed, are less regarded as nostrums, than any other on the list.

II.

In the SECOND CLASS we may place *External Applications*, which consist chiefly, of Salves, Ointments and Embrocations; for it is not necessary, to consider the long catalogue of patent tooth-powders, soaps, and cosmetics, as belonging to our subject.

The Salves, and Heal-alls which are usually sold as secret compositions, are, I believe, generally harmless; and neither better nor worse than many ointments in common use, without the magic virtue of a stamp affixed to them. For simple sores, and many ulcers, the great object in treatment, is to assist nature, by protecting the sore surface from the contact of the air, and one unguent may answer as well as another: — a piece of lint dipped in clear water, and covered with oiled silk, is now frequently applied for the same purpose. Several quack ointments are more stimulant, and better suited to indolent sores: so are a variety of the salves generally sold by druggists, and employed by surgeons. If, however, the public be so patriotic, as to insist upon having a salve with a stamp, and adding by so much to the quarter's Revenue of the Public Treasury, there is, in many cases, no great harm done. In others, though, it is well to remember this caution, — that many external sores depend essentially upon a disordered state of constitution, or upon internal

disease ; and that, unless the *cause* be removed (*that one thing which the quack never considers*) time will be wasted by vain attempts to heal the external effect ; and not only wasted in vain, but perhaps that very time may be so precious, that when, after fruitless quackery, a surgeon or physieian is appealed to; the period for effectual relief has passed, the complaint has become incurable.

There is one Ointment, which notwithstanding its stamp, I am disposed to regard leniently : it is directed solely to an extremely uncomfortable Disease of the Skin, but politeness, and the prescnce of the ladies, forbid me to say more of it than one word — *Barclay!* It is, I believe, a safe and effectual preparation ; though the harmless disease for which it is used, may always be eured, by other similar unstamped remedies.

I must not, however, pass too lightly over this elass of quack medicines. There is among them one sort, which does an immense amount of mischief ; I mean those devoted to *Diseases of the Eyes*. The treatment of opthalmic disease requires considerable skill on the part of the intelligent Surgeon ; and he knows too well, the inestimable value, and the exquisitely delicate organization of the Eyes, not to bestow on them anxious eare and attention. They may beecome diseased in a great variety of ways ; and, when diseased, may require directly opposite modes of treatment, in different stages of the complaint : leeches, and warm poultiees or fomentations, at one period ; and at another, stimulating lotions or ointments, or the application of caustie or blisters. Time, too, is here at least as precious, as in other less obvious maladies : and not only may that preeious and irrevocable time be lost, by the infatuated dupe of quackery, but, if he believes the atrocious falsehoods it

puts forth, he may probably be applying a wrong kind of remedy, and aggravating or masking, instead of alleviating, his disease. We hear of a few apparent cases of relief, it is true; but where are all the victims of such dangerous practice? Could a procession be formed, of those multitudes, who have miserably lost their eye-sight by quack-medicines, it would afford an awful lesson to the dupes of empiricism.

III.

In a THIRD CLASS I would include those quack medicines which are devoted to particular *internal* complaints. These comprise a numerous list: such as are proffered for the cure of *Coughs*, of *Head-aches*, of *Gout*, of *Rheumatism*, of *Bilious Disorders*, &c. &c.; but time will not allow me to advert to more than one or two, as a sample of the rest.

Take for instance those which profess to cure *Head-ach*, and apply to them the principles I endeavoured to inculcate in the earlier part of my lecture.

Numerous, also, are the pretended remedies for *Coughs*, which were similarly before adverted to: — on them, however, I feel disposed to add one word more.

The most frequent kind of cough is that arising from ordinary cold. If this, and nothing more, be the ailment, those who are fond of quack medicines will probably find relief from *Lowden's Pills*, or some of the other Pills, or Balsams, or Lozenges, devoted to this symptom; and great will be the praise of the Pill or Balsam, which has had the lucky chance of being selected: while those who have no particular wish for a stamp, or to buy medicine dearer for sake of a name, may purchase some simple Cough-Mixture or Pills from the druggist or apothecary; or take from their

own choice, a few doses of Squills and Paregoric ; or perhaps not need any medicine more potent, than a warm bed and a treacle-posset, — and they will find themselves as effectually and quickly well as the votaries of Lowden or the Pectoral Balsam. But if the cough be more obstinate, or if it be dry, tickling, and long continued, depend upon it there is more serious mischief brewing ; and that in a part of the body, more liable than all others to incurable disease, and where it is most especially important, that early judicious treatment should be resorted to, or the patient's life may be endangered, or lost. In the former case, then, quack medicines are useless and unnecessary ; in the latter fearfully pernicious. It is possible that the quack medicine may contain a remedy which may chance to do good ; but it will have been obtained at a risk, which no rational person would knowingly and voluntarily incur. It should always be remembered that *one-half the deaths in Great Britain are from diseases of the Lungs* : a large proportion of these being from Consumption.

In this Class we may also find the nostrums which are given to *Infants* and *Children* : and in discussing them, surely an energetic voice should be raised, on behalf of the thousands of miserable and helpless little ones, who are thus every year immolated, before the Molochs of Ignorance and Quackery !

Let us observe one of these devoted Infants from its birth. The offspring, perhaps, of an unhealthy mother, or one whose mode of life is not such as fits her for a nurse, the maternal supply of food disagrees with the child, and *Dalby's Carminative* is the ready resource. This does no immediate harm, only a little Magnesia and Anise or Dill-Water (which most sensible mothers would prefer) would be cheaper, and quite as effectual : and either

remedy can procure little relief unless the cause is removed. The infant grows older, it is probably fed with spoon meat, and its little stomach is loaded with all sorts of improper aliment ; it becomes, in consequence, restless, fretful, and uneasy ; and *Godfrey's Cordial*, or some similar *Soothing Syrup*, is supplied. These baneful medicines contain *Laudanum*, or some other preparation of *Opium*, which ought never to be administered, but with the utmost caution, to the young. And yet, to such a dreadful extent is the practice, of lulling and stupifying their sickly and restless infants, indulged in, by ignorant, idle, and vicious mothers, that these *Godfrey's Cordials* and *Soothing Syrups*, and a similar nostrum called *Peace*, are prepared wholesale by most druggists, (for the receipts and composition of them are known to every tyro in pharmacy) and I have been informed, that several hundred pounds weight of these pernicious compounds, are made and sold annually in this Town, besides the stamped medicines of similar effect.

The wretched infant grows worse ; it is lulled for a few hours, but awakes more fretful than before : so long as any appetite remains, it is coaxed and pampered with improper and trashy food ; one or other of various kinds of abdominal disease sets in : its appetite fails ; more *Peace* is given, and larger doses are required : it is feverish, thirsty, and miserable ; often beer, or black-beer, or wine is supplied, which serve but as fuel to the flame : a medical man is perhaps now appealed to, when too late to afford relief ; his medicines do not quiet the distressed child ; more and more *Peace* is administered ; — the fatal poison slowly but surely works, and the *Peace* of DEATH at length releases the little sufferer.

This is no imaginary picture, but one drawn from practical experience amid the diseases of the poor. The

evils of poverty and mismanagement are thus aggravated, and often brought to a tragic close, by the poison of the charlatan. I know not, that I can enforce more strongly upon my hearers, the lesson which it conveys, than by this simple recital.

If the child escape the dangers of infancy, the dread array of *Worm Medicines* may next assail it. One hint on these must suffice. *Worms are very seldom noxious in themselves*: it is the state of disorder which gives origin and subsistence to them, that constitutes the disease to be cured. Worm-Powders and Worm-Lozenges, therefore, at best can afford but temporary relief, as any brisk purgative will do; but as usual with quack medicines, they leave the *cause* unremoved.

Numerous are the specifics for *Gout*; and those who are subject to this painful disease (for which they have almost invariably to blame themselves, not nature) often fancy, that experience gives them a sufficient knowledge of it for their own guidance, with the help of *Blair's* or some other equally efficacious Pills. They should be reminded, however, that *Gout* is not without its dangers; and that an attack mistreated, or aggravated, may suddenly seize upon some vital organ, (the stomach, the heart, or the brain,) and then it is probably too late, for medical skill to save the unfortunate patient.*

Any old Nurse will be able to tell us what is "*good for the Rheumatics*;" but she would be sorely puzzled to

* "An old gouty gentleman, who thought he knew his own constitution well, mentioned to his physician the common adage, that he ought to be able to cure himself, as every man above forty is either a fool or a physician. The Doctor calmly replied, 'Be assured, Sir, you are not a *physician*.'"

DR. A. T. THOMSON *On the Management of the Sick Room*, p. 373.

tell us what *Rheumatism* is, or how we are to distinguish pain in the back, or body, or limbs, resulting from Rheumatism, from similar pain arising from other, some trivial, some more serious, causes, e. g. from hysteric or neuralgic pains, from flatulence, from inflammation, or from deep-seated or dangerous disease in the body, or spine, or limbs. How, then, are we to know when to apply her nostrum with success? and if time is lost in trying it, may not harm or danger ensue?

I might be led on thus with similar remarks through a long list of Diseases, — *Bilious Complaints*, which, as before said, generally arise from mismanagement in diet or other ways, and without the cause be removed, and the mode of life amended, no permanent relief can ensue:— *Stomach Complaints*, — to which similar remarks might be appended: * — *Hooping Cough*, for which there are a variety of so-called specifics; and many, many, others: but time compels me to be brief, and to proceed to the fourth and last class of quack medicines, to which I propose now to direct your attention.

IV.

THE FOURTH CLASS is meant to embrace that long and copious list of *Universal Specifics*, in which the mighty genius of Quackery delights to revel; wherein she throws off every rag of common sense, and stands forth in naked unblushing absurdity. In this wondrous class we find a host of universal cures for all diseases, from the *Elixir Vitæ* of Paracelsus, down to the more modern

* “It should never be forgotten, that some of the worst and most fatal diseases which flesh is heir to, commence with Indigestion.”

DR. A. T. THOMSON, *Op. citat.* p. 16.

wonders of *Tar-Water*, and *Magnetic Tractors*, — to *Morison's* and *Parr's Pills*, and the still wider and farther famed *Brandy and Salt*.*

“All diseases result from Inflammation,” says the benevolent and enthusiastic MR. LEE ;† “Brandy and Salt cures all cases and consequences of inflammation : therefore only use my remedy, and you may close all your Hospitals, and Dispensaries, and Asylums !”

* A new candidate for public fame is just now placarded on the walls, as a “Wonderful, Universal Remedy, — *Chinese Pills* :” these, no doubt, will have their day, like others which have preceded them, and then yield in their turn to some future novelty, equally wonderful ; possibly, from *Affghanistan* or the interior of *Australia* !

† It is with sincere regret that I am compelled to place a highly respected friend amid such companions ; but the immensely prevalent notoriety and use of Brandy and Salt, necessarily include it in my list ; and its pretensions as a universal specific, place it in this division of our subject. It ought, however, to be stated, that Mr. LEE's views and objects, in advocating his favorite “remedy,” are very different from those of the professed quack. His enthusiasm results from benevolence alone ; and his sole motive, is an earnest desire that all mankind should participate, in what he conscientiously believes to be, an infallible panacea for all disorders.

It was my purpose to have entered more fully into a discussion of this remedy in my lecture, but it would have led me beyond reasonable limits, and I could only allude to it *en passant* ; my attention having been chiefly directed, to the more baneful and poisonous compounds in use as Quack Medicines. In revising my M.S. for the press, however, this note affords me an opportunity of adding the following brief remarks.

Used *externally*, Brandy and Salt is often beneficial, where a spirituous embrocation is required ; and, with the addition of a little Laudanum, it may sometimes be employed with advantage, more agreeably than liniments containing Turpentine, or Camphorated-Spirit, which it feebly resembles in effect. When *internally* administered, in certain weak states of the digestive organs, (the class of diseases in which, I believe, it is most frequently resorted to,) it affords the relief usually produced by an Aromatic Stimulant, combined with a Saline ; but, like the morning dram of the drunkard, it only serves for temporary benefit : in these numerous and varied disorders, other more efficient medicines are required, and also dietetic treatment, which is frequently even of more consequence than medicinal.

“All diseases,” proclaims *the Hygeist*, “arise from one cause, namely, an impurity in the blood; and they are all curable by one medicine:—that medicine is Morison’s Pills!”*

Sometimes “*the Hygeist*” pretends to be more profound and logical: e. g.

- I. The vital principle is contained in the blood.
- II. Blood makes blood.
- III. Every thing in the body is derived from blood.
- IV. All constitutions are radically the same.” (*It might as truly be asserted that all faces and features are the same!*)
- V. All diseases arise from impurity in the blood, or in other words from acrimonious humours lodged in the body.
- VI. This humor which degenerates the blood has three sources, the maternine, the contagious, and the personal.
- VII. Pain and Disease have the same origin, and may therefore be considered as synonymous terms.” (*Is, then, tooth-ache a more alarming disease than consumption, because it is more painful?*)
- VIII. Purgation by the Vegetable Universal Medicine, or other similar Purgative, is the only effectual mode of eradicating Disease.”†

“In any case whatsoever, no matter what the case may be,” — echoes an itinerant Pill-monger every Friday in our

There is no magic in the admixture; Brandy and Salt in solution, is identically the same as Brandy and Salt taken separately: and though a professional critic may smile at the importance attached to rubbing “the crown of the head” with this famed specific, in cases where a little common Spirit, or *Eau-de-Cologne*, would have done equally well, its more dangerous effects when taken habitually into the stomach of patients suffering from disease, must not be overlooked. In justice to Mr. LEE, I may add, that I am persuaded, if his enthusiastic prejudice in favor of his “remedy” did not obscure his better judgment, and he could be convinced of the inevitable tendency to dram-drinking, occasioned by a daily draught of Brandy, and the necessarily fatal results that must ensue, if Brandy were administered, in all the cases of dangerous disease, in which it is recommended in his pamphlet, its now zealous advocate would wish every word cancelled that he has published in its praise.

* Advertisement in *Weekly Chronicle*, Jan. 7, 1843.

† See *Weekly Chronicle*, Jan. 28, 1843.

market, — “if you are afflicted, only take my medicine, and you are *sure* to be cured !”

Such, in a very few words, is a sample of the general pretensions of this class of quack medicines : and, to an audience like that I have now the pleasure to address ; to those who, from their support of a Mechanic’s Institute, evince a habit of reasoning and thinking for themselves, — who have placed the shade of BACON, the great Father and Fountain of inductive philosophy, as their presiding Genius,* — surely I need not enter into any detailed examination of their extravagant claims upon our credulity. The component ingredients of most, if not all of them, are known, as has already been stated, and in many, drugs are found, such as no unprofessional person ought to meddle with : — the records of our Courts of Justice, bear fatal testimony to their baneful effects ; and, if I am not misinformed, our own town can furnish its list of deluded victims.† But even if the Specifics were as harmless as they are dangerous ; if all the virtues of earth, air, fire, and water, were concentrated in them ; the same question as before reiterates itself, — how is it possible for one and the same remedy, to be *good for* diametrically opposite states of disease ? how is it possible for it to do good in all, or even in a majority of cases, with indiscriminate application ?

* In allusion to a bust of LORD BACON, lately placed over the President’s chair.

† Since this lecture was read, the Writer has had the pleasure of assenting to the discharge from the West-Riding Lunatic Asylum, of a female patient, cured, who justly attributes an attack of mental derangement, that commenced in June last, to the use of *Morison’s Pills*, of which she then swallowed *fifteen* as a daily dose. He once attended a man who took *thirty* per day, in whom a severe and incurable attack of Paralysis was aggravated, if not caused, by these pernicious compounds. Similar, and even more fatal, instances of their deleterious effects, might be gleaned from the case-book of almost every medical practitioner.

Suppose, now, any one were to take up a prescription of mine, or of any of my worthy colleagues, which had been written to meet the exigencies of some particular case, and to administer that one prescription, at random, in every case of illness he met with : or, suppose a patient, who had felt great relief from a certain medicine, were to recommend it to *all* his friends who were poorly : — “ Oh,” says a friend, “ the medicine, I dare say, did you a great deal of good, but my complaint is quite different ; yours was in your stomach, mine is in my head, (or lungs) ; yours was from a full habit of body, mine is from weakness and exhaustion ; you required purgatives, my state is exactly the reverse :” — “ It makes no matter,” replies the quackish disciple of Hygeism, “ all diseases are alike ; this prescription did me a deal of good, *therefore* it must cure you, too !”

Yet such nonsense as this, is openly proclaimed, aye, and believed, by thousands of willing dupes, in this enlightened age !

The doctrine of one generating cause of disease is a plausible one, but by no means new. Notions somewhat analogous may be traced in the writings of *Hippocrates* (a lineal descendant in the eighteenth degree from *Æsculapius*) and therefore one might naturally suppose, that in the lapse of more than two thousand years,* philosophers might have ascertained what that cause is. But, unfortunately, no two of these wise men agree, as to its nature and residence ; and hence, I fear we are still far from arriving at the Elixir Vitæ. The most recent discovery of this sort that I have met with, is related in *Professor Williams'* introductory lecture at University College, in October last :

* HIPPOCRATES lived 420 years B.C.

it has, therefore, the advantage of novelty and high authority to recommend it. *Dr. Williams* says, "A certain high official personage pins his faith to an empiric, who was formerly a gardener, and whose notion is, that all diseases proceed from *buttercups*. This is the theory : every man, woman, and child, eats mutton, beef, or butter, and drinks milk : every cow, and sheep, eats buttercups with its grass : buttercups are rank and acrid weeds : *therefore* all diseases proceed from buttercups !" * The logic of the Gardener, is very much on a par with that of the Hygeist ! If diseases do all arise from one cause, it is surprising how many different ways of curing them, are daily practised with success by medical men !

Still, the triumphant exclamation of the Quack will point, to the thousands of wonderful cures recorded ; and to this I am perfectly prepared to reply. If the former portion of my lecture were sufficiently clear, all but a fractional part of these pretended cures, were disposed of by anticipation. Now let us consider those few which actually occur.

If a prescription, such as I have supposed to be taken at random from a physician's table, and we will further suppose for sake of illustration, a prescription for some common form of Aperient Pills, be administered at random to *five thousand* invalids, it is by no means improbable that *three* or *four*, or even *ten* or *twenty* of these, might derive considerable benefit from it. Most quack pills have a purgative effect, and the want of this effect, among the great mass of sedentary and dyspeptic invalids, who are the best customers of the patent-medicine-vendor, — the want of this effect, I repeat, is a fruitful source of a Proteian variety of

* Prof. Williams' Introductory Lecture in the *Medical Gazette*, Vol. XLV. Oct. 7, 1842, p. 55.

symptoms, resembling, to superficial observation, almost every known disease. A brisk dose, or a persevering use of Aperient Pills, (and it is a chance which of the Infallibles gains the credit, for probably one would have done as well as another, and a dose from a druggist's counter as well as any) removes the alarming symptoms, and the imagined disease is cured. It may be, that a not-very-clever medical man has been previously consulted, or that one of greater repute has been misled in the case; and if so, there is no end to the glory of the fortunate Pills, and the said "John Johnson," or "Thomas Thomson," is henceforth blazoned in the newspapers, as a witness of the miraculous cures of the said nostrum!

But what becomes of the failures? Where are the *four thousand eight hundred and eighty, or ninety*? — I will tell you a professional secret: *they are the most profitable patients a medical man can have on his list!*

CONFIDENCE (*Faith*) has always been considered an essential element, in the success of quack medicines; and when we reflect, that even bread-crumb pills have occasioned salivation, because the patient fancied he was taking mercury; and that an anodyne draught has acted as a purgative, merely because the patient understood his physician to say, he would send him an aperient; it is easy to conceive, how important a control the mind exercises, over the action of any medicines on the body. As an illustration of the share which *faith* has in the success of the charlatan, it may be mentioned, that on the death of *St. John Long*, (whose profits were £13,000 a year, when in the height of his prosperity!) a pupil and disciple took the house in which he had resided, and practised with the same renowned liniment: but the charm was gone; the speculation in other hands, was a total failure.

If your indulgent attention is not exhausted, I may advert to one other, not unimportant, danger, arising from quack *Pills*, and that ensues, from the large quantities in which they are manufactured. The placards inform us, that “25,000 boxes of that *miraculous* medicine, *Parr’s Pills* are sold weekly;” and if every box contains three dozen pills, each weighing five grains, the amount is 5 cwt. 26 lbs. of ingredients compounded every week. Now, in the case of this particular medicine, the danger is, perhaps, not so strikingly evident, for I have been told by an intelligent druggist, that *Parr’s Pills* contain nothing more “*miraculous*” than Aloes and Hard Soap; yet suppose several materials of more potent and poisonous efficacy, to be thus mixed up in large quantities; for instance, *Fox-glove* and *Gamboge*, which, with Aloes and Myrrh, I have good reason to believe, form components of certain pills of local celebrity in this neighbourhood, — and *Gamboge* is also said to be a principal ingredient in *Morison’s Pills*; — it is extremely improbable, that when many pounds, not to say hundred-weights, are mixed together at one time, the requisite accuracy can be attained, so that every pill shall contain only its fractional allotted dose of each. To the unequal and dangerous effects, which must arise from this cause, I am inclined to attribute many of the fatal results, which have, often suddenly, followed the ignorant and rash use of these and similar nostrums.

It may probably be expected, that some notice should be here taken of those fertile subjects of quackery, *Homœopathy*, and *Hydropathy*;* but I have purposely confined my remarks to quack *medicines* only, as being

* See Note in APPENDIX.

quite sufficient, (and more than sufficient) for one evening's discussion. I wished to have included the *Bone-setter* and *Burn-curer*, among my list of worthies ; but want of time also precludes any notice of them at present.

The most pardonable use of quack medicines, is in those who have long suffered from chronic disease ; in hopeless cases, or such as have been pronounced hopeless by their medical attendants. In these it is not surprising, that patients often fly to the charlatan, as drowning men are said to catch at straws : and I will not deny, that in some rare instances relief has, under these circumstances, been obtained. On this point I am particularly anxious not to be misunderstood. — I am far from wishing to lay claim to infallibility on the part of the medical practitioner. MEDICINE is a most complicated and difficult study : — from the various branches of science that amalgamate with it ; from the close researches in Anatomy, and the abstruse doctrines of Chemistry, Physiology, and Metaphysics, which are involved in it ; it is, perhaps, *the most* difficult study, to which a man can apply himself, and from its very nature, his path is often clouded with doubt and uncertainty. In the profession of Medicine, as in all other vocations in life, there must naturally exist a great diversity in the amount of knowledge, talent, skill, and experience, possessed by each member of it ; and even the best and most skilful, have sometimes to regret an error in judgment, or a mistake in practice : but, let me ask, if the science of Medicine is thus difficult and abstruse, — if those who have risked their own health, and devoted the best years of their lives in pursuing its attainment, are not always successful, — is it likely, — is it consonant with our ordinary mode of reasoning in all the other affairs of life, — that any one

should peril his comfort and health, nay even his existence, on the cast of a die, as it were; should give himself into the hands of consummate ignorance and audacity; should recklessly trust himself with a guide, perhaps more blind and ignorant than himself, *on the very verge of the precipice of DEATH?*



It has often been asked, what is the remedy for all this evil? — how are quack medicines to be suppressed? I would for once turn empiric, and answer, that which is the only sovereign cure for quackery, in all its motley forms, for superstition, ignorance, bigotry, on all subjects alike, and that is, — KNOWLEDGE, — TRUTH. The knowledge required for this purpose, is an elementary knowledge of the structure and functions of the human body, in a state of health. This I would have taught in all schools, public and private, as an ordinary part of general instruction; and by familiar lectures in public institutions: the elementary laws of life and of health, are as simply to be understood, as the laws of grammar, of arithmetic, and of astronomy, and surely they are as important!

If an arrogant pretender, or a benevolent enthusiast, were to call upon one of the manufacturers or mill-owners of this district, and to tell him, that his cloth was not good nor well-finished, or that his damask was not perfect, the pattern not clear, and the fabric of a bad sort; and add, that he had a certain oil or spirit, which being mixed with the wool, or rubbed on the machinery, would put all right, and make his cloth or damask the very best that could be produced: — that it made no matter whether the machinery

was bad in kind, or broken, or worn out, or out of repair ; or whether the engine-man neglected his duties ; or whether the workmen were in disorder ; or whether the governing and directing head of the establishment was incompetent ; or whether the wool with which the machinery was fed, was of a uniform bad quality ; no matter what was the cause of the cloth or damask being imperfect, — only rub “the crown of the head” of the engine, with this wonderful oil or spirit, and pour “two tablespoonsful of it every morning” into the wool, when it was put to the slubbing machine, and that would cure all defects ; — would not the proposal be laughed at, by every workman about the premises, as outrageously absurd ? And WHY ? Because the workmen *understand* the machinery and business in which they are employed.* Now, the notion of a *Universal Specific* is quite as absurd, if not more so : and so the public would think, if they had but some knowledge of the machinery and laws of health.

But observe, the laws of *health*, NOT of *disease* : — this is a point upon which, I believe, much well-meant energy has been mis-directed, and many books written, that have done as much harm, as they were intended to do good.

* Since the above remarks were committed to paper, the Writer has had the gratification of perusing the following very similar sentiments in a recent publication of high authority : —

“The public, as well as the profession, must be enlightened on these topics. We shall then see empiricism disappear, while ignorance, and mystery, and superstition, in medicine, are dispelled together. There are no quacks among the engineers, because every one knows that an engine must be understood by him who would repair it. When this truth obtains, in regard to medicine, then, and not till then, will that most complicated of machines the human frame, cease to be confided in the derangement of its functions, or the diseases of its structure, to any one who is ignorant of the many springs of its action, and principles of its composition.”

DR. MARSHALL HALL'S *Gulstonian Lectures*, London, 1842.

The treatment of disease should be left entirely to those, who alone are competent to appreciate and understand it. The great object of public education in physiology ought to be, to *preserve health*, and to *prevent disease*. That will much more conduce to the comfort and well-being, both of society and the individual, than any attempt to teach those to treat disease, who are not prepared to comprehend its nature or distinctions; and I would add, if I may be allowed to whisper, in so large an assembly, it would also very much diminish the consumption of drugs, if not the profits of the medical profession. I need not assure you, then, that my recommendation is *disinterested*!

THE BOOKS most worthy of your perusal for attaining the kind of knowledge proposed are

DR. COMBE'S excellent works,

On Digestion and Diet;

On the Principles of Physiology; and

On the Management of Infancy:

PROFESSOR A. T. THOMSON'S most useful little volume

On the Domestic Management of the Sick Room:

and a part of one work, which is, I dare say, on the bookshelves of most of my hearers, though the title may create a little surprise, — I allude to

DR. BUCHAN'S *Domestic Medicine*.

The *introductory portions* will be found full of sound judicious information: but there I must recommend the reader to stop. The remainder of the volume, for reasons just stated, would be worse than useless, even if it were correct, (which it is *not*) and sends a great many more patients to the doctors than it cures.

ADVICE has been said to be “the only commodity which the world refuses to receive, although it may be had gratis, with an allowance to those who would take a quantity.” I will not do my patients the injustice to say, that I find this adage uniformly correct : but certainly professional advice, is seldom so much esteemed when gratuitous, as when it is duly purchased by a fee. To-night, however, after this earnest, though imperfect, endeavour, to assist them to think correctly, upon a subject of great importance, I trust those whom I am addressing, will allow me to offer, in cordial sincerity, one or two parting words of advice ; and I trust that it may be considered as valuable, as if a fee from each individual had accompanied it. It is this ; —

Endeavour to acquire, and to act upon, such knowledge, as shall assist you to preserve health, to prevent disease, or to detect its first approaches if it threaten :

When you are ill, do not tamper with your complaint, but obtain medical assistance without delay ; which, depend upon it, is the best economy in the end : and

Lastly, as you value your own health, and that of those dear to you ; as you would (such as are parents), see your children grow up robust and well ; and as you would avoid trouble, suffering, and expense, prefer short doctors' bills to long ones, or, if possible, do without them altogether ; — AVOID THAT FRUITFUL SOURCE OF ALL THESE EVILS,

QUACK MEDICINES!

A P P E N D I X.

NOTE TO PAGE 35.

HOMŒOPATHY AND HYDROPATHY.

To such of my readers, as do not already understand and appreciate these modern wonders, a brief explanation of them may be interesting, — and *amusing*. Both are comparatively recent importations, from our transcendental neighbours in Germany, and they are, at present, rival candidates for public fame ; each being intended to produce a total *bouleversement* in medical science.

HOMŒOPATHY is a pretended system of medicine, invented by a *Dr. Hahnemann*, which is said to include three important discoveries. These are,—

First ; that all diseases arise from a few elementary morbid conditions :—for example, the genetic form of most chronic maladies, insanity, epilepsy, cancer, gout, palsy, jaundice, dropsy, &c. is stated to be, *the Itch* !

Second ; that diseases are all to be cured by such medicines, as, if given to a person in health, would produce similar symptoms ;— “ *similia similibus curantur*.” Thus, if an invalid suffers from a head-ach, it is to be cured, by some remedy that would cause a head-ach ; and so forth. This is exactly in accordance with the old, though not very elegant, nursery adage,

“ Tobacco reek, if you be well, will make you sick,
Tobacco reek will make you well, if you be sick ! ”

A direct application of this principle, would induce a person who was suffering from a painful blow on one side of the head, to seek for ease by a knock on the other side : it would lead us to treat inflammation of the lungs, by exposing the patient afresh to cold and damp : to relieve the pains of indigestion by an additional surfeit of salmon and lobster-sauce : and to cure a child's stomach-ach by sour plums ! And

Third ; it is asserted, that the potency of medicines is *increased*, in proportion as the dose is *diminished*, — in other words, that the smaller the dose, the stronger it is : and incredible effects are said to be produced, by a thousandth, or a millionth, or even a *decillionth* part of a grain, of many drugs and chemical substances, in ordinary use. For instance, one drop of *Laudanum* requires to be diluted with many thousand hogsheads of water or milk, in order that one teaspoonful of the solution, may be fit for a homœopathic dose ! We are told that a millionth part of a grain of *Charcoal*,—that is, one grain uniformly mingled with more than a hundred-weight of fine sugar, and a single grain of this taken in a pill, produces astonishing effects !! *Gold* is acknowledged to be inert, when taken in substantial form ; but its dose is the *quadrillionth of a grain* ; a fraction so far beyond ordinary comprehension, that it can only be illustrated, by supposing one grain of the precious metal to be equally diffused, through *fifty-eight thousand billions of TONS*,—or more precisely

58128,720238,095238 TONS of *Sugar*,—

a mass probably more stupendous than the whole range of the SWISS ALPS, — *Mont Blanc, Jung-frau, Monte Rosa, all included* ;* and the gold contained in one grain of this imaginary mountain, is circumstantially stated to be so powerful, that even smelling at the phial which contains it, is as much as a patient

* The total weight of THE EARTH has been computed to be, in round numbers, about 400000 *trillions* of pounds, that is,

178,571428,571428,571428 TONS.

See FERGUSON'S *Astronomy*, p. 81.

can bear. A case is even recorded, in which a person suffering under melancholy, with a disposition to *suicide*, was said to be cured *in one hour*, by a *single inhalation* of this magical perfume !!!

For the multiform series of effects, which infinitesimal doses of a long and copious list of several hundred remedies, are imagined to produce; and for an account of the ingenious, and apparently accurate, mode of arriving at this incalculably minute division of them; the inquiring reader is referred, to Hahnemann's Works, and to the Pharmacopœia of the so-called art. The assertions they put forth are so monstrous, and demand so boundless an effort of credulity, that a statement of them cannot be believed, on any less direct authority.

And yet *Homœopathy* has had, and has still, even in sedate BRITAIN, thousands of infatuated supporters, — and *victims* ! It has been justly stigmatised by a medical philosopher of high eminence as “the most impudent insult on the common sense of men, that has ever been offered to it in any age, or in any country.” *

HYDROPATHY, or the *Cold-Water-system*, is the contrivance of a Silesian peasant, *M. Preissnitz*, and is emphatically the *fashionable* quackery of the present day. It can hardly be said to hold out any theory of treatment, but is thoroughly empirical, both in principle and practice. It appears to be a plan, by which all diseases in the world are to be annihilated, by a sort of second *Deluge*; in which the persons and constitutions of invalids, of all classes, are to be drenched and soaked, and washed and rinsed out, with daily, and almost hourly, draughts and baths of *cold water* !

* *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, Jan. 1837, p. 144.

See also *Medical Gazette*, Nos. 467 and 469.

For this purpose, several Hydropathic Establishments have been formed, both on the Continent, and in England, the chief and original baths being at *Gräfenberg*. They are resorted to by crowds of nervous, hysterical, hypochondriacal, and other patients; by many who have long suffered from chronic disease, and to whom another novelty affords another futile hope of relief; and by that numerous class, the *malades imaginaires*. In all these cases, change of scene, fresh air, travelling, and mental and personal *employment*, are most efficient remedies: hence, it is not surprising that many such invalids return home benefited by their tour; though, for a delicate patient, being wrapped daily in ten or fifteen cold wet blankets, and soused with cold water, does not seem the most pleasant occupation that could be devised! The system of steeping for ten hours a day in the hot baths of *Baden-Leuk*, appears, at any rate, much more agreeable!

In both the foregoing modes of treatment, a very rigid and judicious system of DIET is strictly enforced: a fact it is well to bear in mind, when we hear of occasional strange recoveries, under these extraordinary delusions of this intelligent nineteenth century.

In conclusion, the Author has pleasure in referring to an able article on these subjects, in a late number of the *Quarterly Review*, — *December*, 1842; which, however, it may be right to add, he did not chance to peruse, till after the foregoing lecture was written.

